1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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Gunabibi or any of the other ceremonies must be completed; scarcity and sickness are likely to result if it is not.

The snake, then, in this symbolism of nature, is the wet season, and his actions become significant because he swallows the dry season and regurgitates it, which brings a period of plenty.

A number of additional elements to this symbol are suggested by the four myths. The women are swallowed because of their unclean acts. When the various ceremonial elements are listed, the snake is found to be played almost always by the men, and the Wawilak sisters by the women, uninitiated children, and those who are being initiated. Initiated and uninitiated meet frequently on the border line of the general camp (to which the women are ceremonially restricted) and the men's grounds. At times the men invade the ground of the women. The formal grouping of the women and children and of the initiated men is emphasized by this spatial arrangement.

In all instances the male snake (Bapa Indi, Father Big) is a ritualization of the male section of society, and the Wawilak sisters who by their uncleanness have provoked the snake (men) into swallowing them are the unritualized or profane sections of the tribe, i.e., the women and uninitiated boys. The only exceptions to this generalization occur when men take the rôle of women on the men's ground from which women are barred. This brings us, I think, to a deeper level of the great Murngin rituals. The men's age grade is a snake and purifying element, and the sociological women's group is the unclean group. The male snake-group in the act of swallowing the unclean group "swallows" the initiates into the ritually pure masculine age grade, and at the same time the whole ritual purifies the whole group or tribe.

The snake is the fertilizing principle in nature according to Murngin symbolism; this explains why it is identified with the men's group rather than with the women; otherwise one would suppose that the male principle, being identified with the positive higher social values, would be associated by the Murngin with the dry season—the time of the year of high social value.

Seven institutions found in Murngin society are the elementary family, the extended kinship structure, the tribe, the clan, the moiety, the subsection, and the horde. The tribe and the horde are amorphous unities which have no formal structure. The unstable elementary family and extended kin groups are organized into larger formal unities by the clan, moiety, and subsection systems. The totemic system

1; Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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of the Murngin is highly elaborated and permeates all the activities of the group and all of its concepts of life in the world about it; but despite this proliferation of detail of totemic ideas, none of the informal structures have totemic elements as definite parts of their organization, whereas all the formal ones have them. The clan has multiple totems attached to it by authority of the various myths, and the moiety is given these same totems generally by the whole myth. For example, all Dua clans theoretically have the Wawilak totems or the Djunkgao totems according to the area in which the moiety is located. The subsections have definite totems given them, although they are of little importance to the Murngin.

The Murngin clan is a social category which gives spatial form to the kinship system. The ordinary kinship reciprocals can exist anywhere, since a man's father or mari could be almost anywhere in the area, and as a kinship term *mari* is not thought of spatially and in a definite locality, although one's actual father is of course identified with one's own clan. With the introduction of the clan system into the larger social order by the selection of certain lines of relatives out of the total group and the rejection of others through the use of the patrilineal unilateral principle, certain people are given a single unity with respect to the rest of the kin community and are at the same time related to a given area of land. By the inclusion of certain people and the exclusion of others from the kinship pattern, one of the chief functions of the kinship reciprocals is expressed, because the principles which exclude most of the people from one clan include these people in other clan groups and thereby create a clan system integrated into the structure of the larger kinship system. All of the people and all of the clans are related by kinship ties. The kinship system functions as an "international" social system by means of the allocation of the clans to one of two groups. This interclan organization is more simply formed than the kinship structure, and from the point of view of the moiety the segmentation into clans gives greater precision and stronger local solidarities for the people within either half of the tribe. The moiety has spatial significance only indirectly and in a derivative sense; the total territory of the clans of one moiety is its only claim to spatial character.

The Wawilak and Djunkgao myths emphasize the spatial characteristic of the clan by naming its various locations and clan wells, and by relating the wanderings of the two women through the various clan territories; further, the women's travels locate and relate the clans

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Muragin O117

seashore, usually with the points of their fingers. Some of the children were particularly dexterous. Plate 91C is a sand drawing of a goanna and Pl. 91D a moulded figure of a fish.

In Central Australia, I often saw the aboriginal children drawing simple figures on the sides of the drifting sand-hills. Barrett and Croll[2] illustrate figures of dugongs, sharks, crocodiles and even a lugger in sail, which the aborigines of the Wessel Islands had scooped in the sand.

5. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND DESIGN

The social organization of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land dominates every aspect of their social, ceremonial, philosophical and cultural life.

Warner[3] published a list of the clans (which we now call *mala*), the high and low totems of each clan, the language groups (*mata*) and the names of the totemic waterholes. This list is by far the most valuable information we have on the subject. Warner,[4] however, although obviously puzzled about the matter, made the mistake of grouping the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land into tribes instead of clans, failing to recognize that the clan was the most powerful unit.

Thomson,[5] when referring to the same social organization, pointed out Warner's mistake, and at the same time defined the word *malla* (my *mala*) as referring to a strong patrilineal group linked together by the same totemic ancestors. Elkin and the Berndts[6] list some of the *dua* and *jiritja* clans (*mala*) and language groups (*mata*). I also was able to obtain additional data on the subject. Nevertheless, our knowledge of the *malas* and *matas* is still very incomplete.

As my research on the art of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land developed, however, it became evident that the effects of this social organization was as powerful in the realms of pictorial art as it is in other aspects of their culture. I found that aborigines who had totemic ancestors in common were using designs on their bark paintings and other art objects which were unlike those employed by men of different clan affiliations. Inquiries also revealed that many, perhaps all, of these designs, the property of any particular language group or *mata*, had been handed down to them by one or another of their mythical totemic ancestors.[7]

2. Barrett and Croll (1943), Pl. 71, facing p. 76.
3. Warner (1937), pp. 39-51.
4. Warner (1937), p. 35, writes: 'The tribes of north-eastern Arnhem Land . . . are very weak social units, and when measured by the ordinary definitions of what constitutes a tribe fall almost completely.'
5. Thomson (1949), p. 11.
6. Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 23.
7. For origin of designs see myths of *Ngaru-gajamerl* and the *gunjun* crab design, p. 298; *Banaitja* and the *jiritja* designs, p. 281; *barodji* the snake, and other *jiritja* designs, p. 309; *Djunkgao* and the light on the waves, the rising sun and the parallel lines of sand-hills, p. 273.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

*532 ●61 It would seem, from the lists of the clan and language groups recorded by Warner, Elkin and the Berndts, and those of my own research, that the language groups, *matas*, spread over the boundaries of the clans, *malas*. It is with the language groups, *matas*, that the specific designs, the subject of this investigation, appear to belong.

During the limited period I was at Yirrkalla, the aborigines identified a sufficient number of designs, and the *matas* to which they belong, to reveal their relationships to each other. The designs identified, however, are but a small number of those in use. It would be necessary to spend a lengthy period among the aborigines and to travel extensively over their country before one could gather all the information relating to the *matas*, their localities and associated designs.

(1) The Jiritja Mata Designs

*1773 *532 61 As mentioned in the myths,[8] it was the man *Laitjun* and the snake *borndji* who gave individual designs to all the *jiritja matas* throughout north-eastern Arnhem Land, so that each could recognize the other in the ceremonies. Eleven of these *mata* designs were painted on the wooden carved figure of *Laitjun*, 135A, B. Out of these the aborigines identified four on the various bark paintings, engraved pipes and wooden figures in my collection.

Figure 61J, painted on the left breast of the *Laitjun* figure, Pl. 135A, belongs to the *daluwongu mata* of Blue Mud Bay. The design refers to the hive of wild bees which once lived at the Matamataui swamp (Pl. 93B, g, myth, p. 293), but, when threatened by a bush-fire, escaped to Milingimbi. Similar designs, used on the bark paintings of the Milingimbi area, pictured hives of wild bees, Pl. 125D.

Figure 61K, painted on the left thigh of the *Laitjun* figure, belongs to the *mangalili mata* of Blue Mud Bay. It represents an unidentified water-lily, *jonku*. The same design was present on two engraved pipes, Fig. 59C, 62C, and on a body painting, Pl. 128A. All have the same meaning. On the bark painting, Pl 89C, this design refers to the body paintings on *Laitjun* and others.

Berndt[9] states that the *mangalili* design refers to a log at Blue Mud Bay. This may be so, because the toredo worm is associated with both the water-lily and the log mentioned by Berndt. It is almost certain that a *mata* design would refer to more than one myth.

Figure 61M and Fig. 61N are two of the designs belonging to the *gumaitj mata*.

Figure 61M, painted on the right leg of the *Laitjun* figure, pictures reefs of yellow ochre at Gurunga, near Caledon Bay. This design was present on a number of bark paintings (Pl. 118A being typical) and on an engraved pipe, Fig. 62C.

Figure 61N, the other *gumaitj* design, refers mainly to the bush-fire at Matamataui swamps near Caledon Bay and the events that followed. On Pl. 93B, *e*, the

8. Myth of *Laitjun*, p. 279; myth of the snake, *borndji*, p. 309.
9. Berndt (1948), p. 318.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Muragin OII7

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design represents paper-bark and white-barked eucalyptus trees damaged by the bush-fire; on Pl. 93B, *f*, swamp paper-bark trees; on Pl. 116D, the bandicoot and the fire which destroyed his home; on Pl. 117B, crocodiles and lily leaves; and on Pl. 129C (on the body painting of an initiate), a bush-fire and eucalyptus trees. Berndt[10] states that one of the *gumaitj* designs refer to bark being stripped from a tree.

Figure 64H is an unidentified design commonly used by members of the *gumaitj mata* of Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw.[11] It is present on almost all the bark paintings relating to the *Baijini* (Pl. 107D being typical); on many others associated with the totemic creatures of Cape Arnhem (Pl. 108B, for example); on the painted paddles (Pl. 109B); on an engraved pipe (Fig. 63B); and on the carved and painted figures of the *Baijini* (Pl. 139F, G). In general, this design is a symbol for clouds. As only *gumaitj jiritja* artists from Port Bradshaw and Cape Arnhem used this design, it is almost certainly associated with that *mata*.

(2) The Dua Mata Designs

Although not able to obtain a myth explaining the origin of the *dua mata* designs, I gathered the specific names and details of six of them.

Figure 64A is a *djapu mata* design from the Caledon Bay area. It appears to have several meanings. On the bark painting, Pl. 119B, associated with the totemic shark, *mana*, the design illustrates fallen palm leaves lying on the surface of the swamp. On the bark painting, Pl. 89B, and on the engraved pipe, Fig. 60C, both of which belong to the thunder-man, *Bolngo*, at Wulwulwi, it refers to running water, and on the painted coffin of a man of the water totem, Pl. 101B, the same design pictures sea-water.

Figure 64B belongs to the *duralili mata* of Arnhem Bay. It was drawn by an old *dua* aboriginal to show me the *mata* design of his people. It is not present on any of the art objects in the collection.

Figure 64C is the design of the *nainmeri mata* of Arnhem Bay. This, like Fig. 64B, was drawn by a *dua* aboriginal to show me his *mata*. On Pl. 87C it pictures plain and swamp country near Arnhem Bay, associated with *Djunkgao* and his sister.

Figure 64D, the design of the *rirediingu mata* of Port Bradshaw, belongs, in its various forms, to the myth of *Djunkgao* and his sister, *Madalait*. The central panel refers to the lizard, *tjunda*, and the running sand and the cross-hatched panels on either side, to parallel sand-hills and light reflected from the waves at Port Bradshaw. Pl. 86A is typical. The long cross-hatched panels are commonly used on bark paintings depicting other incidents in the journey of *Djunkgao* and his sister (Pl. 85C); on the carved and painted figures of these two ancestors (Pl. 131A, B); and on the body painting of an initiate (Pl. 129D).

On Fig. 64E, the *ngeimil mata* design of Arnhem Bay, the running sand

10. Berndt (1949), p. 318. 11. Map, Fig. 57.

[text continues on p. 409]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Maragin O117

design of the *riredjingu mata* of Port Bradshaw changes to sloping lines which symbolize fallen palm leaves. This *ngeimil* design is used on a bark painting, Pl. 123A, and an engraved pipe, Fig. 64A.

Figure 64F is an unidentified design associated with the *Djunkgao* sisters west of Arnhem Bay. Although it is not certain that this is a *mata* design, the fact that it is used on two bark paintings, Pl. 87A, B, associated with waterholes belonging to the *Djunkgao* sisters, suggests that it might be so.

Figure 64G is the *djambarpingu mata* design. It represents the geese, *wurumatji*, and their tracks at the Duwalaila swamps east of Arnhem Bay. This design was painted on a sacred object, Pl. 128C, and on the body of an initiate, Pl. 129D. The *djambarpingu mata* is an excellent example of how a *mata* (language group) spreads over a number of *mala* (clan groups). According to Warner,[12] the *djambarpingu* language group includes the following adjacent clans or *malas*: *liagaomir*, *djirin*, *gwiyula*, *djapu*, *naladaer* and *djawark*. Further research will, no doubt, reveal that this characteristic applies to a number of the language groups.

THE POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF THE MATA DESIGNS

An examination of Indonesian art revealed that many of the *jiritja mata* designs from north-eastern Arnhem Land are present in the art of the Central Celebes. As the Celebes and other Indonesian islands are north-west, and the natives from those islands sailed to Australia on the north-west wet-season wind, returning to their homes on the dry-season south-easterly, it is not surprising that their art motifs should have diffused among the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land, particularly among those of the *jiritja* moiety, who have adopted all the later innovations of the Asiatic trepangers and the white man—for example tobacco, wooden canoes, the Malay smoking pipe and so on. As mentioned previously (p. 325), the *dua* moiety possesses the older things, bark canoes, spear-throwers and stone spears. Nevertheless, one of the *dua mata* designs, the *djapu*, Fig. 61A, was found on an engraved smoking pipe from southern New Guinea.

Figure 64O, a cloth design from the Central Celebes,[13] somewhat resembles the *mangalili jiritja mata* design painted on the left thigh of *Laitjun*, Pl. 135A.

Figure 64Q, another cloth design from the same area,[14] resembles the *gumaitj mata* design (Fig. 64N).

Figure 64R, also a cloth design from the Central Celebes,[15] is similar to the triangular *jiritja* cloud symbol from Cape Arnhem.[16] This design, which is common in Central Celebian art, was also found on a wooden drum from the Tugeri tribe, Dutch New Guinea.[17] According to the aboriginal who engraved

12. Warner (1937), pp. 43-6.
13. Kaudern (1944), A, Fig. 100.
14. Kaudern (1944), 2, Pl. LXIII.
15. Kaudern (1944), 3, Pl. XXIV.
16. Pl. 107D.
17. Collection of South Australian Museum, No. A9266.